

Speaking of **Success**



NAME: **Albertina Abouchar**

SCHOOL: **Mesa Community College, Mesa, Arizona**

MAJOR: **Psychology**

Like many older students returning to school, Albertina Abouchar wasn't quite sure she would be able to take on the demands of a college curriculum. But with the support of a friend, who had obtained her degree as an older student, Abouchar settled on a two-year community college and launched her pursuit of a college degree.

"I chose Mesa Community College because it didn't feel intimidating, offered a lot of flexibility, and was affordable," she noted. "Also, it had small class sizes and direct interaction with professors, as well as location, because I did not want to waste time commuting."

Finding the right school turned out to be the easy part.

"The first challenge was self-doubt, letting go of the thought that I was too old or not good enough for college," she said. "The best advice I gave myself was to get started despite the doubts and to take one step at a time. I started with Psychology 101, a subject that interested me. Getting an A in that class gave me the confidence to continue."

Once Abouchar settled in she was able to develop a number of approaches to dealing with the challenges of being a first-time college student, and managing a family as well.

"Being a mother with lots of family responsibilities, time management was always a challenge. I set up time for attending classes and time for homework," she explained. "During those assigned times during the week, school came first, no matter how big the pile of laundry. I committed to what I felt I can do, and I didn't take on more responsibility than I could handle."

"Another challenge was to read textbooks without losing concentration. If I couldn't get past a few pages in a textbook, I found other sources of the same information (teacher's slides, online videos, visual aids, etc.)," she added. "Then, I went back to the book, and I didn't find it so hard to follow."

Studying is a matter of finding your own style and making sure to ask for help when you need it, according to Abouchar, who plans to continue her education at a four-year college and major in psychology.

[**RETHINK**]

- Why do you think it was important to Abouchar to have the support of a friend who had successfully completed college as an older student?
- Abouchar suggests the importance of taking one step at a time. How might you apply that advice to your own academic life?